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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUDAPEST 002029

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DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO NSC - DAMON WILSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/04/2011

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [HU](#)

SUBJECT: THE LAND OF THE BLIND: ALL EYES ON PARLIAMENTARY
CONFIDENCE VOTE

REF: BUDAPEST 2005 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: POL/C ERIC V. GAUDIOSI; REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) Rumors abound as the October 6 confidence vote in Prime Minister Gyurcsany approaches. Our sources understand that FIDESZ may be in possession of another tape of the PM and suspect they will time its release around the vote. Local political consultant Krisztian Szabados advises that FIDESZ has also quietly contracted with a local think tank to prepare an independent - and reportedly more radical - austerity plan.

¶2. (C) Szabados believes both camps are unsettled on the eve of the vote. He described the MSZP as having gone "from overconfidence to incompetence" between the April elections and the release of the Gyurcsany tape, and he believes the Prime Minister's support within the coalition will erode over time. He sees FIDESZ as divided between Orban loyalists intent on "avenging" their electoral losses and moderates concerned by the party's inability to control the violence its rhetoric might provoke. The result, he concluded, is "democracy without responsibility," in which "the majority holds office but cannot govern because the minority holds the initiative."

¶3. (C) As Szabados also noted, the shadow of 1956 looms large over the current debate. FIDESZ members talk sincerely of the current showdown as a chance to "finally win the revolution" and often describe their opposition as a struggle against "communism." Although the government's convergence plan represents an effort to address Hungary's future priorities, FIDESZ continues to look resolutely backward, blind to its own disturbing turn toward what Orban has termed "popular democracy." As the 50th anniversary approaches, Szabados agrees that the confidence vote is "not the end but the beginning" (reftel). Whatever the results of the vote in Parliament, he believes FIDESZ will step up its actions to challenge - or openly obstruct - the government in the streets.

FOLEY